

Fundamentals of Temple Ideology from Eastern Traditions

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Truman Madsen has been a dear friend and mentor to me since the early 1980s. Before that, I knew him at a distance as one of Brigham Young University's most inspiring and charismatic teachers and writers. He gave me an extraordinary opportunity in March 1981 when he invited me to present a paper at a symposium entitled "The Temple in Antiquity." My presentation, "The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East,"¹ was published in the resulting symposium proceedings and represented a major step forward in my temple-related research and writing. This article appears after the passage of twenty years and the publication of many articles and one book; it represents a partial repayment for the inspiration and guidance Truman has given me these many years.

My purpose here is to summarize my latest thinking on the subject of temple ideology. As I have attempted to delineate in many previous articles and most recently in my book *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth*,² a common ideology is shared by all the great temple-building traditions. Even though it may not be possible to identify every feature of this ideology in every tradition, in the larger scheme of things, these traditions all share the same underlying view of the temple. In this article I summarize some fundamental features of the temple ideology that have come more to the forefront of my thinking as a result of recent travel (particularly in Tibet, India, Japan, and Indonesia), reading, and thinking on the temple. The primary impetus to write this article came from the 1995 publication of René Guénon's *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*,³ which I consider to be the greatest work of its kind ever published and a vast and inexhaustible mine of insight on the central themes of religion.

I focus here on the following topics: architecture, authority/ priesthood, the cave, the center, the labyrinth, the mandala, mantras, the sacred mountain/mound complex, the mysteries, ritual initiation, sacred geometry, and secrecy. Each aspect of temple ideology, although discussed separately in alphabetical order, is linked and interrelated with all the others. For example, the cave and the labyrinth both relate to or influence the conception of architecture, center, mandala, mysteries, sacred mountain, ritual initiation, sacred geometry, and secrecy.

Architecture

The architecture of the temple cannot be fully understood without also discussing it in context of the cave, mandala, sacred mountain/mound, and sacred geometry; I therefore pass over this subject at this point but will return to it continually below, incorporating its meaning into the remaining themes. Essentially, "the temple is the concrete shape ... of the Essence; as such it is the residence and vesture of God. ... Ritual action and architectural form express one and the same meaning. The structure of the temple accompanies ... the rites and their rhythmic formulae."⁴ Within the great temple-building traditions, the architecture and ornamentation of a temple were conceived as a unity and were reflected in, represented by, and derived from the ritual practices and the symbolism of the temple.⁵

Authority/Priesthood

The idea of authority is anathema in modern society. In traditional societies, carrying out sacred ordinances without properly constituted authority would have been unthinkable.⁶ Within Tibetan Buddhism is a saying: "Without a Lama, there is no Buddha; there is no world; there is nothing." This expression simply underscores the tremendous importance of priestly authority within a temple tradition. The Lamas know the doctrine and have the authority to teach it; without them the doctrine cannot be taught or properly known.⁷ Without the Lamas the secret rituals are worthless because it is improper for unauthorized persons to presume to teach or to ritually pass on the various initiations. Every Tibetan empowerment ceremony begins with a statement of the officiating guru's authority and lineage.

The Japanese scholar-priest Kūkai, the founder of Shingon, gave an elaborate description of his own initiation into the “secret treasury of *mantra*” of the Vajrayāna path. He traced his own Vajra lineage from the day, place (“the Abhiṣeka Chapel in the East Stūpa Hall of Ch’ing-lung-ssu in Ch’ang-an”),⁸ and initiation master back through several generations to Nāgārjuna, thence to the Buddha Mahāvairocana (the Dharmakāya).⁹

According to Alex Wayman, “Even the most prominent authors write authoritatively only in those fields in which they can show they are the link in the chain of teachers. This accounts for the care taken to list the lineage of teachers for the various texts.”¹⁰ In the Japanese Tendai tradition and within Tibetan Tantric Buddhism, the gods are invoked in the temple ritual and called down to be present to bless and sanctify and participate in the proceedings.¹¹ Books do not replace the authorities because the authorities possess the knowledge and ability to perform ritual practices that are only communicated in the sacred environment of the temple. Outside this environment, even detailed accounts of the proceedings in books would be worthless because they would no longer partake of the sacred, initiatory aura of the temple itself.

The great lineage *thangkas* (paintings) of Tibet trace the authority of a given spiritual tradition, beginning with a deity such as Vajradhara, through each successive lineage holder, up to that moment contemporary with the completion of the painting.¹² The concept of authority is actually built into the architecture and decorative program of one of the greatest Tibetan temples, the fifteenth-century Kumbum in Gyantse, Tibet. This temple, built in mandala fashion, consists of seven levels, topped by a chapel corresponding to the “holy of holies.” The initiate would circumambulate each level in a clockwise direction and then ascend to the next highest level until he would reach the upper, most sacred chapel. The chapels on each level are filled with wall paintings and sculptures illustrating the Buddhist doctrine.

The ritual program of the temple is based on the Secret Vajrayāna or Highest Yoga Tantra system of Tibet. The lowest two levels are based on the Kriyātantra and Caryātantracycles, which are the spiritually lowest and most accessible of these teachings. The third-level chapels are based on Yogātantra, the next highest level of teaching and initiation. The fourth level—which is devoted entirely to chapels with sculptures and paintings of the great lineage-holders within the Tibetan tradition, including the Indian gurus who brought the teachings to Tibet, the translators of the scriptures, the early kings of Tibet, and the lineage masters who introduced each of the great temple rituals to Tibet—must be attained before one proceeds to the highest, most secret level of teachings within this system, the Anuttaratantra (from the fifth level on up to the most sacred chapel). In other words, before the initiate could advance to the highest or “inner” levels of teaching, he would have to be instructed in the line of authority on which this tradition was founded. The chapels in the Kumbum temple, particularly those of the fourth level where the sculptures and paintings of the gurus and masters are found, are designed as though they are caves, situated deep within the sacred mountain.¹³

The Cave

Logically, caves would play a large role in the architecture and ritual of the temple simply because mountains are always honey-combed with them. “When the Maya refer to mountains there is, therefore, an assumption that they are also referring to caves.”¹⁴ The sacred mountain that forms the archetype of the temple could not be transformed into the architecture of the temple without the inclusion of caves in the architectural and ritual program.

In Mesoamerica the cave is a primary “place of emergence,” the connecting point between the underworld and the upper world, meeting in the middle, on earth.¹⁵ Mesoamerican temple pyramids have been characterized as “cave

and sacred mountain” structures, giving architectural expression to the vertical aspect of the layered universe.¹⁶ It has been suggested that the cave underneath the Pyramid of the Sun at Teotihuacan may have provided the prime orientation for the entire sacred complex and, ultimately, for the grid of the city.¹⁷

Within shamanic traditions the cave is the place of entryway into the underworld, the place of initiation, the place of vision.¹⁸ Caves were “gateways to the spirit world,”¹⁹ with the various chambers serving as “staging posts on the shamanic journey through the underworld,” stages on an initiatic journey.²⁰

Caves in the temple of Borobudur, on the island of Java, enhance meditation: “The Buddhas in the niches on the four faces have the appearance, from a distance, of *siddhas*, or hermits, meditating deep within caves on the sides of the sacred mountain.”²¹ As the initiates circumambulated the square galleries at Borobudur, rising to each new level, they would constantly have these “caves” in front of their view. They would be aware of their role in the sacred journey and that they, the initiates, were engaged in a ritual journey to the pinnacle of the sacred mountain. In the wonderful phrase of Max Pulver, the initiate is “a voyager bound for heaven.”²²

What is the role of the cave? “The darkness of night and the darkness of the cave may be taken as a symbolic expression of a religious feeling bound up with the ‘earth,’ and indeed in all primordial cults the ‘mysteries’ of birth, death, and rebirth, rising from and returning to the darkness of the earth, are shrouded in darkness.”²³ “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Genesis 1:2). “And God said, Let there be light; and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). “In the beginning this Universe existed in the shape of darkness. ... In the beginning (of creation) there was darkness hidden in darkness.”²⁴ We can expect that temple ritual will express in dramatic form these scriptural themes. The temple ordinances of the great traditions will lead initiates into and out of darkness, usually adopting the structure of a cave. “Cave and Mountain, in the architecture of Greater India are names for the total temple, *Ku (Guhā)* in Burma, *Giri* (mountain) in Cambodia and *Meru*, in Bali.”²⁵

The architectural structure of north Indian temples rises, tower upon tower, to the central peak, like the great sacred Himalayan mountain ranges, such that “the complete *Prāsāda* has the form of an unbroken ascent from the base to the finial. ... Within it and below the superstructure is the *Garbhagrha*, the ‘womb of the house,’ a small chamber, square, in the majority of preserved temples, and dark as a cave in a mountain.”²⁶ In fact, a certain Indian temple type, the *Guharāja*, “Great Cave,” is formed from the root word *guhā*, which means “cave.” This is cognate with *gupta*, “secret,” and with the Greek *kruptos*, which ultimately yields the English word “crypt.”²⁷

Guénon approaches the etymology of this same word from a slightly different perspective:

The word *guha* [Sanskrit] is derived from the root *guh*, meaning “to cover” or “conceal” or “hide,” as does another similar root, *gup*, whence *gupta* which applies to everything of a secret character, everything that is not externally manifested. This is the equivalent of the Greek *kruptos* that gives the word “crypt,” which is synonymous with cave. These ideas are related to the centre insofar as it is considered as the most inward and consequently the most hidden point. At the same time, they refer also to the initiatic secret, either in itself or insofar as it is symbolised by the disposition of the place where the initiation is accomplished, a hidden or “covered” place, inaccessible to the profane, whether the access to it be barred by a “labyrinthine” structure or in any other way (as for example, the “temples without doors” of Far Eastern initiation), and always regarded as an image of the centre.²⁸

One of the earliest preserved Hindu temples from the early fifth century, temple number 17 at the central Indian site of Sanchi, was built to replicate a cave, while a temple at Nachna from a slightly later date, had its masonry walls “rusticated” in order to make it look like a mountain “within which the sanctum’s ‘womb-chamber’ acted as the cave.”²⁹ This building practice was carried out within a highly sophisticated architectural setting in India at that time, indicating that the requirements of the temple ideology dictated the rustication, not inadequate or unsophisticated architectural or building potential.

According to Titus Burckhardt, within medieval Christian sacred architecture, which “re-animates customs and forms that go back to prehistoric times, and assimilates them into its own perspective,”³⁰ Romanesque churches, especially in the Pyrenees region of Spain, were built in such a manner that the barrel vaulting “conferred on the nave, which ended on the east with a niche-like apse, the aspect of a cave.” He relates the ideology of this practice to the ancient Oriental concepts of the cave: “It is the universe turned inward, the secret world of the heart or of the soul, in which earth, Heaven, and all things are prefigured, and which is illumined by the Divine Sun of the Spirit.”³¹

The ambulatory passageway in Romanesque churches took the pilgrims around the area of the apse, where they could view sacred relics in the crypts situated underground. In the later Gothic period, these underground passageways were raised to ground level, creating the choir ambulatories of Gothic cathedrals.³²

Stella Kramrisch emphasizes the underground depth of the sacred shrine of the Hindu temple (the Garbhagrha, or “cave”). “The finial above it shines golden, high up, straight above the omphalos, or centre of the Garbhagrha, the womb and cave in the mountain. Or else no floor separates the lower and the upper chamber, they are one; only the sunk level is preserved. The one and only Garbhagrha is often much lower in level than the hall, the Mandapam by which it is approached; stairs lead down to it, to a depth of seven or eight feet, or less.”³³ “The underground crypt is secret. ... The Garbhagrha, the Cave in the Mountain, lies below its highest point. Along this axis, on any level of the temple, there is, in principle, this secret centre.”³⁴

Initiation and meditation occur within the inner sanctuary of the temple. Pala period Buddhist art and Pala-inspired Tibetan painting both place the deity or the initiate in this place, either taking the form of the Garbhagrha³⁵ or the cave,³⁶ or as a depiction of both together.³⁷

At the Horyuji temple, just south of Nara in Japan, the octagonal Yumedomo, or Hall of Dreams, was built in the eighth century over the hallowed site of a building in which an Asuka period prince, Shotoku Taishi of the sixth century, had retired in order to read and translate the Chinese Buddhist sutras and to receive divine revelation. Studies have shown that this building, where Prince Shotoku meditated, “had the characteristics of a space for incubation that could have been found in a mountain cave.”³⁸ This further suggests the traditional role of the cave in the holy mountain as a place of enlightenment and divine revelation: “And he arose, and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. And there he came to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kings 19:8–9 Revised Standard Version).³⁹

The Center

This idea is so commonplace as to have become something of a cliché. The great temples are viewed as centers in five ways: (1)they are the projection onto the earth of the celestial temple; (2)they represent the upward extension, the architectural realization, of the primordial mound and the mountain that rises up from

the mound; (3)they are established on the place of the primordial revelation, that is, the place of initial creation; (4)they are a representation of the Edenic paradise; and (5)they are designated to be such by priestly or prophetic authority. The center is a place *ritually determined* to be such (by the priestly authority), not necessarily a place or point actually central in a geographic sense. According to Guénon: “The Centre is ... the point of departure of all things, ... the only image that can be given to the primordial Unity. ... [B]y its radiation, all things are produced.”⁴⁰ Further, “The Supreme Centre ... is a ‘symbol of the Edenic state’; ... this state remains accessible to man.”⁴¹

The center is fixed in its earthly place through its orientation to the four cardinal directions, through its central axis that connects the worlds (underworld, earth, and heaven), and through ongoing astronomical sightings, which keep the temple and its initiates in constant communication with that ultimate place, heaven. Since the center (the temple) came down from heaven, contact with its place of origin must be maintained, thus promoting the role of astronomy.⁴² According to Guénon: “The centre of the ground space, ... the point situated directly beneath the summit of the dome, should be always virtually identified with the ‘Centre of the World.’” Here the rites take place that “make the construction of a building a true imitation of the very formation of the world.”⁴³

From a somewhat different point of view, Coomaraswamy has said: “It is recognized also, of course, that the ‘whole earth is divine,’ i.e., potentially an altar, but that a place is necessarily selected and prepared for an actual Sacrifice, the validity of such a site depending not upon the site itself but on that of the sacerdotal art [that is, the priestly authority]; and such a site is always theoretically both on a high place and at the center or navel of the earth, with an eastward orientation, since it is ‘from the east westwards that the gods come unto men.’”⁴⁴

The center is the source of the doctrine and spiritual authority, representing the goal toward which humankind strives. In and through the temple (the center), a vision of primordial purity and perfection is manifest, pointing in two directions: toward Eden as origin (thus the presence in temple paintings, decoration, adjacent gardens, etc., of the image of what I have called the “primordial landscape”—an image of the way the world was “in the beginning”) and toward heaven as goal (thus the presence of chapels in temples representing the celestial realm).⁴⁵

The Labyrinth

The classic study on the labyrinth, still not superseded, is that of C. N. Deedes.⁴⁶ The subject of the Egyptian labyrinth has been treated in more depth by Alan B. Lloyd.⁴⁷ The extraordinary work of Carl Schuster has now been compiled and published, with one massive volume of this vast work devoted to the labyrinth.⁴⁸ Keith Critchlow and others have studied the labyrinth at the Chartres cathedral,⁴⁹ and Lima de Freitas has written a thorough and eloquent account of the subject in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*,⁵⁰ with an extensive bibliography. Finally, Guénon devotes a substantial amount of space to the labyrinth in his book.⁵¹

As is the case with mandala, the term *labyrinth* has an etymology and specific meaning and context within a specific tradition. From that tradition, it has moved out into more general cultural and religious studies and is used with meanings that may or may not be intrinsic in its original meaning. The word is attested in the Minoan Linear B tablets as *da-pu-ri-to-jo* and was actually applied to the building at Knossos that we now know as the labyrinth.⁵² According to Pliny, the Cretan king Minos commissioned Daedalus to build him a labyrinth; Daedalus patterned his Minoan structure on an Egyptian prototype, the famed and legendary labyrinth of Ammenemes III, a Twelfth-Dynasty pharaoh, at Hawara in the Fayum. The name *labyrinth* was applied to the Egyptian structure by classical authors, based on the legendary labyrinth of King Minos.

Although Sir Arthur Evans, the excavator of Knossos, identified the main structure as a palace, other scholars, in particular Castleden, have established the labyrinth at Knossos as a temple. Thus the floor plan of the palace of Minos at Knossos is the best-preserved example of the archetypal temple as labyrinth:

But if we were able to visit the Labyrinth in its heyday, when the walls were complete, we would have had a very different experience. Blind walls would have separated these sanctuaries from one another. In some instances, as on the boundary between the Triton Shell Sanctuary and the Late Dove Goddess Sanctuary, there was a double wall separating them. The labyrinth was a maze with an enormous number of gloomy, unlit dead ends. On the whole, they make sense only as spaces for secret, esoteric rituals, each one with its own labyrinthine entrance route. ... Leading into or out of these shrines there are often sacristies or vestries for robing and other preparations for ritual, inner chambers for more secret rites and stone safes let into the floor for storing sacred vessels.⁵³

At Knossos, the labyrinth, the sacred mountain, Mount Juktas, and cave sanctuaries connected with it are also strongly associated.⁵⁴

As far as the Egyptian labyrinth of Ammenemes III, Lloyd has demonstrated that it was doubtless a temple complex, covering a vast area of 1,000 x 800 ft. (established by the excavations of Petrie); he believed that it actually enclosed within it six temples, which served as a mortuary temple and as a series of temples to various deities. Because of the badly preserved remains of this temple complex, it is difficult to square the plan with the statement of Herodotus that it consisted of fifteen hundred rooms above ground and an equal number of subterranean chambers.⁵⁵

The labyrinth as a temple feature has been studied much and yet is still not really established in its architectural and ritual temple roles. I propose a solution to this problem. Within the temple context, the labyrinth or maze is symbolic of the difficult journey to the center and, as actualized in the architecture of the temple, serves as the ritual pathway that initiates must follow on their journey to the center. Spiral movement is representative of the configuration of the path that deities use to enter this world. Thus, the labyrinth or maze is the shape of the "pathways between the worlds" and must be used by humans to approach those earthly representations of the divine world, the temple. Labyrinths provide the means of approach to the caves, where initiation takes place.⁵⁶ The initiatic secret is found in the most inward, hidden place (the cave) or the innermost shrine of the temple. The labyrinth both allows and bars access to this place.⁵⁷

The labyrinth also has a role in modern Maya cave ritual: "The ritual specialist chose two locations in the cave to perform his ceremonies that can be related to a high-mountain and a low-water site. Access to these locations was through 'tiny and tortuous' passageways and included scaling a rock face with a rope."⁵⁸ Only the worthy and valiant can traverse this intricate, convoluted, spiral path successfully. Others will lose their way or will be devoured by the Minotaur, as occurred in the Minoan labyrinth. This path is intimately connected with the cave and with the journey into the underworld (as we see at Knossos). The labyrinth requires a guide, as Strabo reported for the Egyptian labyrinth: "Before the entrances there lie what might be called hidden chambers which are long and many in number and have paths running through one another which twist and turn, so that no one can enter or leave any court without a guide."⁵⁹ This means that temple ritual requires a guide (by which I mean priestly authority).

The Upper Paleolithic period was the time in human culture in which mountain, cave, and maze coalesced in the same ritual context, as is seen so vividly in the cave paintings of France and Spain. According to Erich Neumann, "We are dealing with the archetype of the way, of the mysteries, at the end of which there is a transformation which plays itself out in the holy place, the central space, the uterus of the Great Mother. This place of transformation, however, is to be reached only by way of initiation which leads through a dangerous labyrinth

pregnant with death, and in which no conscious orientation is possible.”⁶⁰ The manner in which Upper Paleolithic religion stands as a foundation for all that has followed was worked out brilliantly many years ago by Gertrude R. Levy.⁶¹ The combination of mountain, cave, and maze (that is, the form or pattern of the ritual path to the cave within the depths of the mountain) was set down in that era and has ever since stood at the center of the temple ideology.

Once the sacred mountain was transformed into a temple building, the resulting architecture had to represent all the features of the mountain, the approach to the mountain, and heaven. In other words, the temple (mountain) architecture must include representations of the mountain itself, its soaring peaks, the caves deep within it, the difficult and tortuous path the initiates must take to reach it, and the heavenly temple of which it is an earthly model. It is in temples such as the Borobudur, the Kumbum, and the Cambodian Angkor Wat that we see all these features come together in such striking fashion. And the floor plan of all these temples corresponds to the mandala configuration. The mandala floor plan, as viewed at Borobudur in particular, has subsumed within itself the mazelike (labyrinth) pattern as a feature of its design and as a part of its ritual—the circumambulation of this temple incorporates the passage into and through the labyrinth. Thus, the mandala and the labyrinth are part of the same architectural and ritual process. Chronologically, the labyrinth is an architectural stylization of the ritual pathway into the Upper Paleolithic caves of France and Spain; the mandala is then a further architectural stylization, a formalization that has persisted, of the labyrinth. The mountain, the cave, the labyrinth (mandala), and heaven—these features are at the heart of the architecture and the ritual of the temple.⁶²

“Finding the way through a labyrinth, conceived as a mental, spiritual, and metaphysical enigma, corresponds to the successful conclusion of an *iter mysticum*. It can be expressed visually by transformation of the labyrinth drawing into what in Indo-Tibetan terms is known as *mandala*.”⁶³ According to Guénon, the cave is the site of the initiatic trials; the labyrinth is the way that leads to it, as well as the obstacle that prevents the unworthy from approaching.⁶⁴ Furthermore, “This passage [in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* where the gates to the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl are described] must have a real symbolic value, since it is based on the close relationship between the labyrinth and the cave, both of which are connected with the same idea of a subterranean journey.”⁶⁵

The concepts of cave, labyrinth, and ritual initiation come together in the context of funerary rites. The temple ordinances provide us with a pathway to the other world. This pathway follows the spiral of the labyrinth, entering the cave, exiting to mount the heights of the mountain toward heaven and renewed life.⁶⁶

There is only a preparation for initiation in death to the profane world, followed by the “descent into hell” which is, of course, the same thing as the journey in the subterranean world to which the cave gives access; as for initiation itself, far from being considered as a death, it is on the contrary like a “second birth,” as well as a passage from darkness to light. Now the place of this birth is still the cave, at least when it is there that the initiation is accomplished, in fact or symbolically. ... The passage from one state to another is always considered as having to be effected in darkness. ... The course of the labyrinth is therefore, in this respect, a representation of the initiatic trials; and it is easy to conceive that when the labyrinth actually served as a means of access to certain sanctuaries, it could be planned so as to enable the corresponding rites to be accomplished in the very course of passage.⁶⁷

The traversal of the labyrinth laid into the pavement along the central nave in front of the altar in a number of French Gothic cathedrals was seen as a substitute for the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The centers of these mazes

were referred to as “*ciel*’ [heaven], or ‘Jerusalem.’”⁶⁸ These places therefore constituted the “Holy Land” within the sanctuary, the “centre of the world.”⁶⁹ Some medieval traditions tell of an image of the Cretan Minotaur that was laid into the center of the labyrinth. It is said that the image in the center of the labyrinth at Chartres cathedral could be seen up to the time of the French Revolution, when it was removed and used to make cannon balls.⁷⁰

The Gothic cathedral labyrinths were constructed with elaborate geometric symbolism, combining the ideas of center and pilgrimage, linking the labyrinth, and thus the cathedral itself, with the heavens, constituting a reconstruction of Neoplatonic cosmology. “The implications point to the diagram being not only the structure of the universe but also in Neoplatonic terms, a diagram of the ‘shells’ of reality.”⁷¹

The labyrinth establishes the fundamental pattern of all ritual: it is convoluted and serpentine since one cannot approach a shrine directly; it is fraught with barriers, difficulties, even danger, thus defining the path to the center as an ordeal, the end goal of which brings joy and completion to the initiate; it requires indirect, “labyrinthine” movement along its route, including circular dance, since in so many sacred traditions circularity is seen as the motion and pattern of the divine world, which the shrine and the pathway to the shrine must duplicate (the meeting place of heaven and earth). Furthermore, the role of sacred dance emphasizes the wholly sacral character of ritual: neither ordinary secular walking, nor ordinary clothing, nor anything associated with everyday life is appropriate in this ritual journey. “The pathways between the worlds are also trodden by his human adherents in the dances by which they assimilate themselves with his life-force.”⁷²

The Mandala

A mandala is a sacred, magical, auspicious design consisting of the combination of circle and square. The shape, with its focus on the circle (referring to the heavens) and the square (referring to the earth), forms the foundation of the traditional view that the cosmic ritual structure brings heaven and earth together. In this place the initiate confronts and achieves union with the divine realm.

The English use of the term *mandala* comes from a Sanskrit word that means “round,” “circle,” “totality,” or “assembly.” The Japanese pronunciation is *mandara* and uses ideographs that mean “a place where the Buddha is protected,” while the Tibetan is *dkyil* ‘*khor*; *dkyil* means “central” and ‘*khor* means “peripheral.”⁷³ Esoteric schools of Buddhism interpreted the etymology of the word as consisting of two roots: *manda*, meaning the essence, and *la*, meaning possession or attainment. Thus mandala means possessing or attaining the essence, in other words, the essence of supreme enlightenment.⁷⁴

Mandala-like designs can be documented to the earliest periods of human existence and appear in many religious traditions besides Hinduism and Buddhism, such as the sacred sand paintings of the Navajos. Within the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, mandalas can be painted or constructed of sand particles or can form the architectural plan of a temple. Mandalas are used for ritual initiations and for meditation. From the psychological point of view, the mandala motif is an archetype that represents the individual’s movement toward wholeness or unity. The circle represents the laying down of a sacred precinct, a protective enclosure or *temenos*, within which is found the square sanctuary, or the focal point of individual movement toward the center, where unity of life and consciousness will be found.⁷⁵

Within Vajrayāna Buddhism, the most common mandalas are sacred, numinous shapes representing the celestial palace of the deity residing at its center. The deity at the center can be either peaceful or wrathful, depending on the stage of Yoga Tantra that the initiate has achieved, as well as the needs of the initiate. These so-called “palace”

mandalas have four square walls and four gates and are surrounded by several circular precincts, which represent different stages of consciousness and barriers that must be overcome before the initiate can enter the precincts of the palace itself.

Tibetan mandalas that are devoted to meditation on a wrathful deity have four such circular barriers that the initiate must symbolically pass through before reaching the heavenly palace in the center: (1) a ring of fire in five alternating colors, symbolizing the burning away of all spiritual impurities and erroneous thinking (as well as blocking access to the sacred precincts to the unqualified); (2) a ring of *vajras*, the sacred ritual implement that stands for the adamant character of the truth; (3) the eight traditional cremation grounds arranged in a circular fashion, representing the eight forms of consciousness and reminding the devotee of the tradition of meditating in cemeteries in order to realize the transitory nature of all earthly phenomena or of esoteric rites that would be performed in the cremation grounds;⁷⁶ and finally (4) a ring of lotus petals, symbolizing the unfolding of spiritual consciousness as one approaches the center place, the palace of the deity.⁷⁷

The mandala is a projection of the heavenly realm onto the earth, achieved by means of sacred geometry. It is thus the primary expression of sacred geometry in temple architecture, as well as the primary vehicle for meditation in esoteric (Tibetan and Japanese) Buddhism. The mandala, whether in the form of an architectural temple plan or as a painted or sand-particle structure, represents the cosmos in its totality: hell or the underworld, the world in which we live, and the divine realm. The initiate, the one meditating, traverses this structure through ritual circumambulation either in actuality, as in the case of a temple, or in the spirit and mind, as in meditation, just as one would traverse a labyrinth, walking the difficult path of initiation to reach the center or the divine realm, where one attains enlightenment.

Initiation into the mysteries of the mandala is at the heart of esoteric Buddhism: "In the first chapter ... , Kūkai defines the 'Teaching of the Secret Mandala' (*himitsu mandarakyō*), or the 'Esoteric Teaching' (*mikkyō*), as consisting of the Dharmakāya's speech and of the language of the three mysteries, which reveal the 'wisdom of his inmost enlightenment' (*naishōchi*)."⁷⁸ Kūkai's teacher told him that the teachings of "*shingon hizō* (the secret treasury of mantrayana) [were] so subtle and abstruse that they cannot be transmitted without the help of pictures and diagrams." So the teacher authorized a court painter and other artists to paint the *gharbadhātu* (womb-world, representing the feminine aspect of heaven) and *vajradhātu* (the diamond realm, representing the masculine aspect of the universe) mandalas.⁷⁹ The mandala is thus itself the subject and object of initiation into the mysteries, as well as an aid in understanding initiatic texts.

The world's greatest mandala temple, Borobudur in Java, shows us the sequence of the initiatic drama of mandala ritual. The initiate would ascend the structure, circumambulating the lower, square galleries first, which represent the realms of hell, followed by this world with its travails. He would approach and then reach the upper, semicircular platforms, and finally the uppermost circular level, where he would gain ultimate release, enlightenment, nirvana.⁸⁰

But beyond the architectural aspect, the mandala, particularly in Tantric Buddhism, is transferred or projected onto the human body, where all the features of the painted or architectural mandala are represented at the appropriate places in the body, the *chakras*. Furthermore, in Tantrism, the mandala is the focal point of meditation techniques. No actual or visible mandala need be present as the initiate experiences the labyrinthine journey to the center, to enlightenment. All the architectural details of the mandala are present in the visualization process.

This is expressed in one text as follows: "The body becomes a palace, the hallowed basis of all the Buddhas."⁸¹ The

Navajos use their mandala-shaped sand paintings as a means of bringing a sick person back into harmony with himself and with the universe.⁸²

The sacred, auspicious shape of the mandala prescribes the architectural style of the temple building as well as the process, direction, and spiritual content of the initiation ritual.

The most general meaning of a sanctuary is the reconciliation of earth and Heaven. Therefore it is also a *sācrātum*, a place set apart from every other earthly condition, for in it the otherwise prevailing separation of Heaven and earth, the fall of man and his world from the Eternal, are symbolically and spiritually overcome. In the architectural form of the sanctuary, this can be represented outwardly in several ways; however, the linking of the two existential poles “heaven” and “earth” is expressed with particular eloquence when the sanctuary consists of a square building surmounted by a cupola: the cupola represents heaven, whereas the earth, in its inert condition, subject to the four elements, the four natural qualities, and the four seasons, is “square.”⁸³

When consecrated under proper authority, the mandala becomes the heavenly palace of the deity, and the initiates are to imagine themselves sitting at the eastern door of this palace. The mandala is a temple in miniature.⁸⁴ Within Tantric Buddhism, every temple is a mandala.⁸⁵ The temples and monasteries that were built in mandala fashion were seen to be earthly manifestations of the heavenly realm, with the entire cosmos incorporated into the earthly structure, as at the Samye monastery in Tibet or the temple of Borobudur in Java. They were “heaven on earth,” and the rituals carried out in them instructed the initiates in the heavenly plan. In these purified spaces the divine could be revealed, and secret instruction was passed on through the ritual that would benefit the initiates.⁸⁶ Many natural landscapes are mandalas.⁸⁷ Burckhardt relates the mandala concept to the ritual processes and their underlying spiritual meaning, seeing similarities between the classical Asian mandalas, their architectural realization as temples, and the picture of the Heavenly Jerusalem and its temple that we are given in the book of Revelation:

The symbol of a perfect city or a perfect building as epitome of the timeless perfection of all things derives from such a deep and universal vision, and corresponds so completely to the spiritual essence of all architecture, that it must inevitably also be found outside the Christian tradition; in fact, it is present in every theocratic culture. It appears most clearly, and in a form most closely related to the Christian one, in Hinduism. The ground plan of the Indian temple is founded on a geometrical scheme which transposes the cosmic orbits, both solar and lunar, into a regular and chequered square, whose peripheral areas (which correspond to the signs of the zodiac) are, like the “gates” of the Heavenly Jerusalem, ruled by angels or *devas*, while its centre, which is looked on as the source of all light, represents the “place or locus of god” (*Brahmāsthana*).⁸⁸ The same symbolism appears again in some Buddhist meditation pictures, on which, inside the circle that represents the endless cycle of becoming and unbecoming, there is a square resembling a palace or a city with its gates. In the centre of this, an image of the Enlightened One sits on a throne. This brings us back to a Christian view, expounded by St. Augustine and other Church Fathers, according to which passion and sin wander around in a circular motion, while the righteous soul, formed by the cardinal virtues, is “square,” like a regularly chiselled foundation stone.⁸⁹

Neumann brings this symbolism about mandalas together within a biblical perspective: “The symbol of the circular mandala stands at the beginning as at the end. In the beginning it takes the mythological form of paradise; in the end, of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The perfect gure of the circle from whose center radiate the four arms of a cross,

in which the opposites are at rest, is a very early and a very late symbol historically. It is found in the sanctuaries of the Stone Age; it is the paradise where the four streams have their source, and in Canaanite mythology it is the central point where the great god El sits, 'at the source of the streams, in the midst of the sources of the two seas.'⁹⁰ This scene is frequently represented in the "primordial landscape" temple decoration.⁹¹

Mantras

Within the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, mantras are sacred syllables and phrases, preserved primarily in the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Japanese languages. They are pronounced, often in multiples of many thousands, to invoke blessings as part of rituals and, in the Tantric visualization process of Tibetan Buddhism, to generate the meditational deity within the mind of the initiate. Mantras, which are necessary to enjoy communication with the higher powers, are the most highly visible elements of a ritual language remaining from ancient temple ritual. Within Tibetan Buddhism, "From the germinal syllables, the smallest and most highly concentrated symbols of the deities, rays of light originate that then condense into the forms and symbols of the deities until they become recognizable with the utmost clarity and brilliance." And further, "At the beginning of the meditational creation of the yogi the germinal syllable is seen as the origin and the center of the visionary world."⁹²

This is the doctrine of creation by the Word, so well known in the ancient Egyptian texts (the Theology of Memphis) and in the Bible (the Gospel of John). Mantra also refers to the necessity within temple ritual for a secret or code language, a divine language if you will, which is required in order to attain communication with higher powers. This language can take the form of phrases (mantras), single words, or syllables (Sanskrit *bīja*—the "seed syllable"). But the language would not be a contemporary, secular, spoken language. For example, Carl Kerényi refers to the ritual language of the ancient inhabitants of Samothrace, described by Herodotus.⁹³ It is also possible that the (still undeciphered) Minoan Linear A script will turn out to have been a sacral language used in the ritual of the labyrinth.⁹⁴

Mantras are the gateway to the profound secret knowledge of Tantra. Kūkai, in his work *Distinguishing the Exoteric and the Esoteric*, quotes the Buddha Vairocana as saying: "O Lord of Secrecy, as I observe the wheel of my mantra, the realm of my speech, it is the gateway to a purity so vast and boundless that it envelops the entire world. It is the gate through which the intrinsic nature of all the different sorts of living beings are manifested as they really are, the gateway that brings all living beings to bliss."⁹⁵ Mantras constitute "the sacred language necessary for the maintenance of cosmic order."⁹⁶ "In the model of maintaining cosmic order [that Kūkai] envisioned, the role of the clergy is to maintain the linguistic technology of mantra, for that makes possible the unfolding of the universe as the ultimate scripture in which all names are already consummate and need no rectification, the unfolding through which order in both nature and society is maintained."⁹⁷ Furthermore, within Japanese esoteric Buddhism "the practitioners' recitation of *mantra* is their entry into *Dharmakāya's* royal palace, where they receive their new birth from the union between *samādhi* and *mantra* of the divinities in the *maṇḍala*, and where they establish themselves as heirs in the family of the *Tathāgatas*."⁹⁸

Guénon has described this process better than any author I am aware of: "The repetition of these formulas aims at producing a harmonisation of the different elements of the being, and at causing vibrations which, by their repercussions throughout the immense hierarchy of states, are capable of opening up a communication with the higher states, which in a general way is the essential and primordial purpose of all rites."⁹⁹

Mantras are sacred words and formulas, preserved in the scriptural languages, which make possible communication with higher realms. They are the secret language of this communication, if you will.¹⁰⁰ In "Indic culture as a whole there is an underlying conviction that the spoken word, more particularly the ritually, solemnly

uttered word (or even a sound sequence without meaning) is a thing of great power.”¹⁰¹ However, in addition to the power assumed for this form of discourse, there is a (ritually) practical application—mantras are the means by which deities are addressed.¹⁰² When I say “deities are addressed,” this of course assumes that they are addressed in ritual, ceremonially. There can be no unceremonial or casual—“secular”—approach to the divine (that is, within the temple context).

The Sacred Mountain/Mound Complex

The idea of a sacred mountain or mound complex is of course fundamental to the idea of the center. The primordial mound, which becomes the temple-mountain, defines the center. At the place where the primordial waters of creation receded, the earth that appeared there becomes the most sacred, powerful, charged spot of earth imaginable, and it is that place that is enshrined in the most holy sanctuary in the temple.¹⁰³

The image of the mountain provides the elevation or sectional architectural view of the temple. We will see below that the heavenly model, through sacred geometry, provides the floor plan of the temple. The mountain provides the temple building with its architectural elevation (external or side view). The ascending, soaring features of temple architecture define them as the “mountain of God.”

Coomaraswamy has summarized this idea in a most interesting manner:

The altar, like the sacred hearth, is always theoretically at the center or navel of the earth, and the solar eye of the dome is always in the center of the ceiling or *coelum* immediately above it; and these two are connected in principle. ... [or] in fact, by an axial pillar at once uniting and separating floor and roof, and supporting the latter; as it was in the beginning, when heaven and earth, that had been one, were “pillared apart” by the Creator. It is by this pillar—regarded as a bridge or ladder, or, because of its immateriality, as a bird on wings, and regarded in any case from its base, for “there is no side path here in the world”—that the “hard ascent after Agni” ... must be made from below to the Sundoor above; an ascent that is also imitated in countless climbing rites, and notably in that of the ascent of the sacrificial post ... by the Sacrificer who, when he reaches its summit and raises his head above its capital, says on behalf of himself and his wife: “We have reached the heaven, reached the gods; we have become immortals; become the children of Prajāpati.” For them the distance that separates heaven from earth is temporarily annihilated.¹⁰⁴

The mountain, or temple, is the meeting place of heaven and earth. Through its origins in the underworld, as symbolized in the primordial mound of creation, it also unites the three world regions: underworld, earth, and heaven. A central axis or pillar uniting these three zones provides a means of access to and through them by kings or prophets.¹⁰⁵

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place, and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ... So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone which he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel; ... and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house. (Genesis 28:10–12, 18–19, 22 RSV)

Thus the temple originates in the underworld, stands on the earth as a “meeting place,” and yet towers (architecturally) into the heavens and gives access to the heavens through its ritual. “The Axis of the Universe is ... a ladder on which there is perpetual going up and down.”¹⁰⁶ The ladder rises throughout the worlds—one passes from hierarchy to hierarchy via the rungs—each one a degree of universal existence.

The architecture of the temple projects the building both as a mountain and as a structure based on a heavenly model. “When the Maya built a temple or pyramid near or on a cave site or water shrine, they were creating a house that replicated the deity’s home at the mythological mountain, thus duplicating a cosmological concept.”¹⁰⁷ “The language of the texts connects the mountain and the cave while describing works of architecture.”¹⁰⁸

The mountain and the temple are inseparable. The sacredness of the one (the mountain) is transferred to the other. All those features that cause or create or determine the sacredness of the mountain are attached to the temple and determine its architecture, its symbolism, and its ritual.

The Mysteries

The mysteries are something quite specific. Kerényi explains the etymology of the word: “The source of the term ‘Mysteria’—as also of ‘mystes’ and ‘mystikos’—consists in a verb whose ritual significance is ‘to initiate’ (Greek *μύειν*), developed from the verb *μύειν*, ‘to close the eyes or mouth.’”¹⁰⁹ The Romans translated *myesis*, the act of closing the eyes, with *initiatio*, from *in-itia*, “going into.” Kerényi further explains: “A festival of entering into the darkness, regardless of what issue and ascent this initiation may lead to: that is what the Mysteria were, in the original sense of the word.”¹¹⁰ Through the initiation (the *myesis*), the initiate became one of the *mystai*.¹¹¹

What was the context and content of the mysteries? The context was a nighttime initiation of going into the darkness, usually into an underground cave or cavity, a subterranean shrine deep within the sacred mountain or within the temple itself. Temple ritual is based on rebirth, resurrection, and life out of death.¹¹² Because the temple is either a natural mountain or an architectural rendering of a sacred mountain, caves associated with this mountain would serve as the locus of rebirth ritual. That ritual would precede the ritual of “coming out into the light” and of ascending to the uppermost chapels of the temple, the heights of the sacred mountain, to heaven. Rebirth takes place in the cave. Installation into the highest heavens takes place on the heights. The initiate is “dead” while blindfolded and, following an “eye opening” ritual, becomes alive and leaves the cave to begin the ascent into the light, to the heavens. The initiate has then become an *epoptēs*, “one who sees.”¹¹³

As to the content of the mysteries, “The Mysteria took the initiate back to the very beginning of life, its natural genesis, and not to any philosophical ‘principle.’”¹¹⁴ Furthermore,

By mythological images the Attic mysteries still easily led man back to the natural roots of his existence. No special miraculous instrumentality was needed to open access to the realm in which those roots lay; it was a realm whose power had not yet been exhausted, and he who was rooted in it stood firm as a god; the festival with its natural, atmospheric wonders, and man’s continuity with his history back to the profoundest sources of his life, back to the world of his ancestors; these were enough. The presence of what had gone before, which the soul harbors as its most intimate treasure, was efficacious and powerful.¹¹⁵

How were these things enacted? According to Paul Schmitt,

The degrees of insight are transmitted by **δρώμενα** and **λεγόμενα** (ritual actions and words). *Dromena* and *legomena* are enacted and spoken by priests and mystai. (The term, **όργια**, related by its root to **έργα** “work,” also occurs.) The **τελετή** (“completion,” from **τέλος**) designate the final stage of ‘knowledge’ and consecration. The *telos* (ultimate aim) consists in the attainment of a beatic immortality, of a desirable state after death. Symbolically, man enters the underworld, he “dies” in a *dromenon* [i.e., ritual action], or is “wedded,” and he is always symbolically reborn; then he lives no longer in “death” but in “life.”¹¹⁶

And finally, “we are told that the sacred mime, the *dromena* and *legomena*, was performed by priests with the attributes and often the masks of the gods.”¹¹⁷

Kerényi describes the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis; the Lesser were performed at Agrai in the month of Anthesterion (our February) and served as a preparation for the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis, performed in the month of Boedromion (our September).¹¹⁸ Only those initiated at Agrai could proceed to the Greater Mysteries at Eleusis. Those initiated at Agrai experienced the *myesis* and bore the designation *mystai*, or “initiate.”¹¹⁹ The classical sources distinguished the two stages of initiation as that of *myesis* and *epopteia* (“having seen”).¹²⁰ “We do know that the mysteries consisted of things that were shown and actions that were performed—*deiknymena* and *dromena*—and probably also of things that were said, *legomena*.”¹²¹

At the heart of the esoteric tradition of Buddhism are the “three mysteries”: mantra, mudra, and mandala. “Kūkai argues that what the *Lankāvatāra* called *hosshin seppō*, the ‘Dharmakāya’s preaching of the Dharma,’ and *naishō shōō*, ‘his noble activity of inmost enlightenment,’ is in fact the Dharmakāya’s three mysteries—the chanting of mantra, the gestural movements of mudrā, and the visualization of maṇḍala, the ritual acts described in various Vajrayāna texts by the Dharmakya, acts of creating his attendant divinities, producing their maṇḍalas, and communicating with these divinities of the maṇḍala to manifest and enhance their bliss in the Dharma.”¹²²

Ritual Initiation

The purpose—essential and primordial—of all rites is to open up communication in higher states.¹²³ The temple is based on a secret doctrine, or the mysteries, which form the basis of temple initiation. The temple is a great public space that is in some parts and at some seasons of the ritual year open to a broader public at the time of the great festivals. A more restricted, “secret” part, accessible only to the few,¹²⁴ is where initiation occurs. Anytime communication with the higher worlds is desired or is in process, one would be immersed within the initiatic domain, “but it can easily be appreciated that something of a quite different order takes place when there is any question of an action that has a repercussion in the higher worlds. In such a case, one is obviously in the ‘initiatic’ domain in the fullest sense of that epithet.”¹²⁵

The main purposes of the temple ritual are to explain and represent the primeval paradise whence humankind came and to ritually prepare the initiates to reenter that paradise following death. Through temple ritual, the initiate experiences a *drama* of origins. Part of this usually takes place at night and involves an unveiling, a viewing of sacred objects, a *reenactment* of a creation account (a foundation story), in which the creation accounts are *made present* through their ritual reenactment. “The true myth is inseparably bound up with the cult. The once-upon-a-time is also a now, what was is also a living event. Only in its twofold unity of then and now does a myth fulfill its true essence. The cult is its present form, the re-enactment of an archetypal event, situated in the past but in essence eternal. ... On this day the whole memory of the great ancestral experience is again true and present. The gods are at hand, as they were at the beginning of time. ... And the mystai are witnesses of this event, which in essence is not a play, but divine presence, realized myth.”¹²⁶

Walter Otto's words here provide a caution against reducing temple ritual merely to a *play* or a *drama* carried out by priests with the initiates as actors in the creation account. Kernyi, Schmitt, and Otto portray the ritual as re-created or restored relations between the heavenly powers and the initiates in a form so powerfully real and present that the experience served as a lifelong support and foundation for a happy and meaningful life.¹²⁷

Participation in the Mysteries offered a guarantee of life without fear of death, of condence in the face of death. That is why the poets looked upon the initiates as so superior to other mortals. All Greeks—actually all Greek-speaking persons, the language was the criterion—could share in this gift. It conferred on Greek existence a sense of security, and because it was able to do this, it responded to a spiritual need which, it was not unreasonable to suppose, formed a bond uniting the whole human race: this was the need for a bulwark against death.¹²⁸

A rite is an imitation, a re-creation, or *re-presentation* of a heavenly, divine act(ion), the purpose of which is to establish contact or communication between heaven and earth. Rites serve as the technology of this communication.¹²⁹ As J.McKim Malville writes: “The temple is a participatory cosmogony, a creation myth in stone by means of which one can re-experience the creation of the world and thereby be transformed,” and “Every day the properly prepared individual can return to the primordial instant of creation and within the boundaries of the temple imitate the emanation and reabsorption of the cosmos.”¹³⁰

After the creation, humans and gods walked together on the earth. With the fall from paradise and subsequent separation from the gods, men and women can experience this needed and desired communication with the gods only in the appropriate ritual space—the temple. The (re)union is awesome and overpowering. For example, after his dream, Jacob “was afraid, and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of god, and this is the gate of heaven’” (Genesis 28:17 RSV).

The most outstanding contribution of Guénon to the concept of ritual initiation is his idea that traditional temple ordinances consist of several levels or hierarchies of initiation and that these hierarchies correspond to the levels or states of being. In general he identifies three degrees of initiation within the great primordial traditions.

Now what can be the significance of these three precincts [in Rome, Athens, etc.]? We thought at once that it must be a question of three degrees of initiation, ... which [relate] the three precincts to the three circles of existence recognized by the Celtic tradition. These three circles, which are to be found under another form in Christianity, are the same as the “three worlds” of Hinduism, which moreover sometimes represents the celestial circles as so many precincts around *Meru*, the sacred mountain that symbolizes the “Pole” or the World Axis. ... [W]here genuine initiation is concerned, its degrees correspond to so many states of the being, and it is these states which in all traditions are described as so many different worlds. ... [T]he heavens are strictly speaking “spiritual hierarchies,” that is, degrees of initiation; and it goes without saying that at the same time they relate to the degrees of universal existence, ... in virtue of the constitutive analogy of the Macrocosm and Microcosm, the initiatic process rigorously reproduces the cosmogonic process.¹³¹

Within the Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition, the threefold nature of initiation is most vividly represented within temples. At Borobudur and the Kumbum, the “heavenly” levels of the architecture are divided into three levels. The uppermost chapel in the Kumbum, the *harmikā*, is subdivided into three stories, with the lower story dedicated to the ritual of the “Father Tantras,” the upper devoted to the ritual of the “Mother Tantras,” and the

uppermost (the most holy place in the temple) devoted to the statue and ritual of the highest Tantric deity, the Ādibuddha Vajradhāra.¹³² The uppermost level of the Borobudur temple is taken up by three terraces—the first two elliptical and the third (the uppermost that any initiate could reach) circular.¹³³

In the biblical temple tradition, initiation begins in paradise and ends in the Heavenly Jerusalem.¹³⁴ Temple initiation recapitulates the three stages of life: birth, aging, and death. These are doubtless the “stages of existence” whereof Guénon speaks, and they stand at the foundation of the thinking of Kerényi and Schmitt, quoted above in the section on Mysteries. In its most fully developed forms, temple initiation thus celebrated birth, the passage to adulthood, marriage, death, and the reunion with ancestors.¹³⁵

The physical direction of temple ritual is always some combination of upward, around (circumambulation), and inward toward that part of the temple that represents heaven, or toward the top of the sacred mountain (Exodus 19), where communication with the deity can occur. This upward, circular motion imitates climbing the mountain as one reaches the inward recesses of the temple. The most holy place is always the innermost, most remote, and most removed place from profane life and is represented by the mountain, the architecture of the temple, and the cave. According to Puay-Peng Ho, “the centralised building of two storeys [in the Han Dynasty Ritual Hall at Chang’an] is taken to be the cosmic mountain, the axis that connects the world of man and the world of gods. What is ritually required of the Son of Heaven is to perform an annual sacrifice to Tian, Heaven, in the Tongtianwu, the upper chamber from which access may be gained to Tian.”¹³⁶

Sacred Geometry

Many of the themes addressed above relate to sacred geometry. It cannot be emphasized enough that the temple connects and unites the worlds. Just as the mountain gives the temple architecture its external, directly visible appearance and the cave, along with the labyrinth or maze, gives the temple its ritual processes, so heaven supplies the earthly temple with its floor plan. Because the earthly temple is a projection onto the surface of the earth of the heavenly temple, continual contact and communication must be maintained between the two spheres. This occurs through the orientation of the temple—to the four cardinal directions or the four intercardinal directions—and sightings on specific stars and other celestial bodies.¹³⁷

The temple, with its celestial decorative motifs, gives us the topography of the heavenly realms.¹³⁸ Through the motifs, the heavenly prototype is transferred to the earth.¹³⁹ The temple is the architectural and ritual medium that makes communication between the worlds possible. Bell discusses the function of portals and doors:

The portals [“false doors”] were not meant to function in palpable space. Rather, they worked in divine dimension. They were gateways permitting direct, *magical* communication between earth, sky, and netherworld. Ordinary mortals could not cross their thresholds, but the blessed dead and the living king, as well as priests and other initiates, could pass through them to the kingdom of heaven. Nor were these stelae the temple’s only portals of otherworldly transport. The wooden doors of the sanctuary shrine, which enclosed the divine image, were called the “doors of heaven.” At their opening, ritual participants were projected into the realm of the divine.¹⁴⁰

The projection of the heavenly model onto the earth is done by means of “stretching the cord” rituals,¹⁴¹ which are remarkably widespread among the great temple cultures. Finnestad has documented this practice in Egypt:

Even though *Seshat* has no particular role in the cosmogony, her measuring act has an unmistakable cosmic mark, as its performance is timed and directed by a special star constellation given an analogous function in the cosmogony, namely the *Mshwtjw*. Before the foundation the stars are examined and the measuring is done with reference to *Mshwtjw*. In the long cosmogony text the *stretching out (pd)* of the *utmost ends (hntj)* takes place when this star constellation is seen. There is at this point a correspondence between the laying-out of the cosmic area (*pd hntj*), and the laying out of the temple site (*pd šs*). As the utmost ends of the cosmos are stretched out (with the wings of the Ruler-of-flying) and the limits established while it is still night, so the cord is stretched over the foundation site and its sides are established while it is still night.¹⁴²

Guénon explains it this way: The “Lodge is the image of the Cosmos,” built according to the cosmic model. The chalk-line is the “terrestrial projection” of the cosmic model.¹⁴³

According to the Maya “Book of Council,” the Popol Vuh: “Great were the descriptions and the account of how all the sky and earth were formed, how it was formed and divided into four parts; how it was partitioned, and how the sky was divided; and the measuring-cord was brought, and it was stretched in the sky and over the earth, on the four angles, on the four corners, as was told by the Creator and the Maker.”¹⁴⁴ The Late Hellenistic cult of Serapis in Egypt combined these temple surveying techniques of several traditions.

The temple of the cult, the Serapeion, was oriented according to astrological principles. For the nocturnal rite it was oriented toward the star Regulus in Leo, belonging to Helios (for Serapis is not only Zeus, Hades, Dionysus-Osiris, but also Helios), and for the celebration of the founding of the cult toward the sun: at a certain hour the beams of the sun fell upon the lips of the statue of Serapis. The ancient planet worship, which no doubt lay at the source of certain local cults, the sites of which were in some specific way related to the rising sun, moon, or other heavenly body, found its place in the cosmic dromenon of the eclectic cult of Serapis.¹⁴⁵

Linda Schele observed about the Maya tradition: “With that discovery [finding out what the sky looked like at sunset, midnight, and dawn on the night of the winter solstice], I realized that every major image from Maya cosmic symbolism was probably a map of the sky.”¹⁴⁶ Additionally, “The day we had that discussion, I received a paper from José Fernandez, a young Spaniard teaching archaeoastronomy at Baylor University. José has studied the role of astronomy in the alignment of Uxatlan, the capital of the K’iche’ at the time of the conquest, finding that all the major temples were oriented to the heliacal setting points of stars in Orion.”¹⁴⁷ Karen Bassie-Sweet points out how, in the Early Classic temples at Uaxactun in Guatemala, if one were to stand on the platform of Pyramid E-VII, one would observe that “the sun rises over the northeast corner of Temple E-I on the summer solstice, over the center of Temple E-II on the equinox, and over the southeast corner of Temple [E-III] on the winter solstice. These buildings, an architectural model for the east side of the world, demonstrate that the eastern midpoint was aligned with the rising of the equinox sun.”¹⁴⁸

Within imperial Chinese tradition, just as “the Divine Being (Shangdi or Tian) dwelt in the polar regions of the heaven ... his astral capital should be imitated by the earthly capital, the seat of the Chinese emperor.”¹⁴⁹ The Greeks, according to Jean Richer, “wanted to make their country a living image of the heavens.”¹⁵⁰ He describes in great detail the ancient Greek system of aligning sacred mountains, temples, and oracles with each other as “a

mirror of the celestial harmony of the zodiac and the planets of the solar system.”¹⁵¹ “The very shape of the sanctuaries,” he writes, “unites the image of the earth with the projection of the heavens.”¹⁵²

One of the most astonishing representations of the connection between heaven and earth in sacred architecture was built into Chartres cathedral. On the Royal Portico, the cathedral’s west front, the three tympanums above the doors themselves represent the Savior in the three aspects of his mission: on the right-hand entrance as he first descended to earth, on the left-hand side as he ascended to heaven, and in the middle as he sits in full glory as the triumphant Savior. Thus the doors represent him as the Alpha and Omega, the only doorway to salvation.

The seven planets are symbolized on the right-hand tympanum in the guise of the Seven Liberal Arts that are sculpted around the archivolt that surrounds the Savior seated on his mother’s lap as an infant. The signs of the zodiac are carved around the archivolt of the left-hand tympanum, except for Pisces and Gemini (which are found on the right-hand door). “These belong to the unchanging heaven of the fixed stars and thus represent the kingdom of the Divine Spirit, to whom this door, with its representation of the ascension of Christ, is dedicated. The seven planets, on the other hand, govern, according to the ancient viewpoint, the world of the soul.”¹⁵³ Paradoxically, while the birth of Christ is represented on the south side of the cathedral’s main axis (which ordinarily would indeed be the New Testament side), his ascension is found on the north side (the Old Testament side). The solution to this seeming paradox is to be found in the solar alignment of the doors. They apparently relate to the ancient idea of the “two doors of heaven,” *januae coeli*—namely, the two solstices. Through the first door, the “door of winter,” the newly returning sun enters into our world, and through the second, the “door of summer,” this same light leaves the world. “The location of the winter solstice, which occurs during the Christmas season, is in the southern heavens, and the location of the summer solstice in the northern; it would seem that the representational order in the west door of Chartres cathedral is a direct reference to this: through the southern door the Divine Light descends into the world; through the northern it returns into the invisible. Between the two gates of Heaven stands the immutable axis of the world; to this the central door corresponds.”¹⁵⁴

Secrecy

On the topic of secrecy, Guénon asserts, “Secrecy ... implies that the traditional truth itself is no longer accessible ... to all men equally,”¹⁵⁵ and the “mountain is ... primordial,” signifying the period when all had direct access; the cave is secondary, signifying the period of “obscuration.”¹⁵⁶ This is demonstrated in the biblical tradition by the idea that in the beginning, Adam and Eve walk with God and approach him directly. With the fall, this access was broken off. The temple and its rituals are then introduced to humankind by deity in order to restore communication. The knowledge of the temple and its rituals, however, is never really “lost.” It becomes unknown to the broad masses, is “occulted,” but is carried on as a secret tradition, as in Kabbalah.

The “secrets” are the content of the sacred drama within the ritual setting. Ancient Babylonian ritual texts contained the formula: “The initiate may show the initiate. The uninitiated may not see. Taboo of (such and such) god.”¹⁵⁷ If this information is used outside the context of initiation, its meaning and power are lost. It must and will therefore remain secret, since the milieu, spirit, and meaning of initiation cannot be replicated outside the place of initiation. Initiation is the secret doctrine, the greatest secret and the greatest mystery. Certain things in temple ritual (“secrets”) simply cannot be known by noninitiates. These include contextual things, the feeling (“spirit”), and things said or explained by religious authorities that are “non-textual” or part of an oral tradition.¹⁵⁸ Written or published versions of temple ritual may even mislead the reader, for a variety of reasons. “This text abounds in ‘esoteric’ words, i.e. in terms that by their very definition require an explanation which only a qualified teacher gives only to his initiated disciples.”¹⁵⁹ Wayman discusses secrecy in Buddhist Tantras:

The *Hevajratantra* was edited and translated into English. In this sense they are not secret in the sense of being withheld from the reader. But they are still secret, if one can believe the commentators, in that reading these Tantras still conveys little of what the tantrists themselves are doing in the drawn-out rites, with their multitude of details, chanting, and so on. ... In the case of a tantric text, it will always be a mistake for any reader to think that his proven intelligence (by university degrees and the like) or his proven intuition (by life experience and the like) will enable him to penetrate the meaning of a basic Buddhist Tantra text, because the meaning is in the doing of it, and there is no substitute for someone showing how to do it. That someone of course is the guru.¹⁶⁰

Heinrich Zimmer further explains how secrecy is preserved through initiation:

The instructions are present in the stream of the oral tradition, passing from teacher to disciple, to serve only as mnemonics for the essential and the characteristic; not mentioned are many other details that are simply carried along as matter too familiar to note. ... The text transmits occult knowledge that cannot be used effectively by any uninitiate into whose hands it might accidentally fall. The more it omits as it instructs, the more secure its occult doctrines are from profanation. What distinguishes the initiates is that they understand one another anywhere by means of simple suggestion, and that they require no more than fragmentary, allusive axioms as mnemonic devices found in a particular tradition.¹⁶¹

Within Japanese ritual, initiates can only be taught orally. “The word *mikkyo* in Japanese, which bears the connotation of a ‘secret’ teaching, does not so much mean privileged as it does orally transmitted instructions. The hand gestures (*mudra*), mantric chants (*mantra*), and eidetic visions (*mandala*) must be seen and practiced in order to be understood. ... Nothing can substitute for a trip to the sacred mountain.”¹⁶² Within the esoteric tradition of Japanese Buddhism, initiation into the three mysteries (*honnu sanmitsu*) of *mantra*, *mudra*, and *mandala* is what constitutes Vajrayāna practice. “By contrast, Kūkai suggests that the Shingon School bases its interpretive operation on Vajrayāna discourse, whose salient orientation toward the ritual languages of *mantra*, *mudrā*, and *mandala* distinguishes Shingon from other schools.”¹⁶³ “Although some of the secret teaching [of Shingon] has been divulged to the world in these modern days, ... certain religious truths and practices can only be taught orally and are known by a secret communication between teacher and pupil, and are never to be given out through the printed page or in a crowded assembly. In other words, they are esoteric in the fullest sense of the term. To study ‘Shingon’ on its esoteric side, it is necessary to have a personal teacher who initiates his pupil into the secret practices and the deeper significance of the doctrine.”¹⁶⁴

Mantras are also central to the secret aspect of temple ritual. They, the mantras, the verbal formulas, constitute central “secrets” within the oral transmission process of initiation ritual. They are at the heart of what the initiated masters know and what they pass on only to chosen adepts within the confines of the initiation ritual itself. Within many temple traditions, knowledge of the mantras or of the ritual formulaic language remains unknown to the uninitiated.¹⁶⁵ In Tibet, the Tantric path is referred to as the Secret Mantra Vajrayāna path. “*Mudrā* and *mantra* are *arcana sacra*, only accessible to those duly initiated, and therefore only comparatively little information, especially about the *mudrās* and the liturgic correspondence between *mudrās* and mantras, is to be found in literature dealing with Buddhism.”¹⁶⁶ Within Indian Tantrism, those mantras that are transmitted from teacher to initiate within the initiation process are sometimes referred to as “‘ear to ear’ transmission (*karṇāt karṇopadeśena*).”¹⁶⁷ Within these traditions, extensive measures are taken to ensure the secrecy of the mantras,

such as transmitting them as part of a secret code, embedding the mantric syllables within a sequence of ordinary phonemes to form a cryptogram, and “writing the mantra in reverse order.”¹⁶⁸

Mudras, the sacred hand gestures, act to “seal” or guarantee the efficacy and the veracity of the mantras.¹⁶⁹ Esoteric training within Buddhism revolves around the three mysteries of mandala, mantra, and mudra, distinguished by three languages: “the phonic language of *mantra*, the gestural language of *mudrā*, and the graphic language of *maṇḍala*.”¹⁷⁰ As part of the coronation ceremonies for the Japanese emperor, “his Esoteric Buddhist master” transmits to him “secret *mantras* and *mudrās* for his enthronement.”¹⁷¹ The mudras and mantras transmitted by the master include those of “the five eyes,” “the *mudrā* of the wisdom,” “the *mudrās* of reigning over the four cosmic oceans,” “the precepts of the ten good deeds,” and “the *mudrās* and *mantras* of the four masteries.”¹⁷² This initiation ritual prepares the emperor to become a “cakravartin, the ideal virtuous ruler and the exemplary lay Buddhist patron of the Sangha.”¹⁷³ Names are also secret, including names of deities¹⁷⁴ and the new names that initiates receive upon conversion or upon entry into the mysteries of initiation.

The mystery is the ritual itself, the setting and the process, which should not be, indeed, cannot be reproduced outside the proper setting within the temple. To attempt to do so falls under the description given by Kernyi: “We must guard against excessive talk—a sin against the sacred atmosphere, an involuntary falsification of atmosphere.”¹⁷⁵ “No one who had not been initiated was permitted to enter the precinct [at Eleusis] where something higher than *myesis*, the first rite, was solemnized. Even for this introduction into the secret, absolute secrecy was prescribed.”¹⁷⁶

It will remain for another occasion for me to attempt to integrate and synthesize these and yet other features of the temple ideology into a more complete and comprehensive study, one which I will also hope to fill out with many more specific applications to the great temple traditions of humankind.

Notes

This essay is a revised and enlarged version of a paper published in Rome, Italy: John M. Lundquist, “New Light on the Temple Ideology,” *East and West* 50 (2000): 9–42.

1. John M. Lundquist, “The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East,” in *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984), 53–76.
2. John M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993).
3. René Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols: The Universal Language of Sacred Science*, comp. and ed. Michel Vālsan, trans. Alvin Moore (Cambridge, England: Quinta Essentia, 1995).
4. Stella Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple* (India: University of Calcutta, 1946), 1:165. For a wide range of illustrations of architectural temple types, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 66–67.
5. See Phyllis Granoff, “Heaven on Earth: Temples and Temple Cities of Medieval India,” in *India and Beyond: Aspects of Literature, Meaning, Ritual and Thought: Essays in Honor of Frits Staal*, ed. Dick van der Meij (London: Kegan Paul, 1997), 184; Ragnhild B. Finnestad, “Temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods: Ancient Traditions in New Contexts,” in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Byron E. Shafer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 204; George L.

Hersey, *The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture: Speculations on Ornament from Vitruvius to Venturi* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 2.

6. I dwelt on this subject in my book, Lundquist, *Temple*, 20–21, drawing extensively on my own experience as an observer of Tibetan ritual.

7. Steven M. Kossak and Jane C. Singer, *Sacred Visions: Early Paintings from Central Tibet*, with an essay by Robert Bruce-Gardner (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 8.

8. Ryūchi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra: Kūkai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 198–99; see 190.

9. See *ibid.*, 221–22.

10. Alex Wayman, *The Buddhist Tantras: Light on Indo-Tibetan Esotericism* (New York: Weiser, 1973), 233.

11. Michael R. Saso, *Tantric Art and Meditation: The Tendai Tradition* (Honolulu: Tendai Educational Foundation, 1990), 8; Mary Van Dyke, “Grids and Serpents: A Tibetan Foundation Ritual in Switzerland,” in *Constructing Tibetan Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Frank J. Korom (St-Hyacinthe, Quebec: World Heritage, 1997), 200.

12. Jane C. Singer, “Taklung Painting,” in *Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style*, ed. Jane C. Casey and Philip Denwood (London: King, 1997), 59.

13. Franco Ricca and Erberto Lo Bue, *The Great Stupa of Gyantse: A Complete Tibetan Pantheon of the Fifteenth Century* (London: Serindia, 1993). For my photographs of the Kumbum Temple, along with its top plan, see John M. Lundquist, “Borobudur: The Top Plan and the Upper Terraces,” *East and West* 45 (1995): 297–99, 302.

14. Karen Bassie-Sweet, *At the Edge of the World: Caves and Late Classic Maya World View* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 66.

15. John B. Carlson, “A Geomantic Model for the Interpretation of Mesoamerican Sites: An Essay in Cross-Cultural Comparison,” in *Mesoamerican Sites and World Views: A Conference at Dumbarton Oaks October 16th and 17th, 1976*, ed. Elizabeth P. Benson (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, 1981), 154.

16. *Ibid.*, 163.

17. *Ibid.*, quoting Doris Heyden, “An Interpretation of the Cave underneath the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan, Mexico,” *American Antiquity* 40 (1975): 131–47.

18. Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Abrams, 1998), 27.

19. *Ibid.*, 35.

20. *Ibid.*, 103.

21. Lundquist, *Temple*, 18–19, with photographs, including some of my own, 40–41, 82–83.
22. Max Pulver, “Jesus’ Round Dance and Crucifixion According to the Acts of St. John,” in *The Mysteries: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, Bollingen Series 30:2 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), 191.
23. Paul Schmitt, “The Ancient Mysteries in the Society of Their Time: Their Transformation and Most Recent Echoes,” in *Mysteries*, 99.
24. Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple*, 164.
25. *Ibid.*, 171. For an illustration, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 46–47.
26. Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple*, 162.
27. *Ibid.*, 171 n. 108.
28. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 145–46.
29. Michael W. Meister, “Symbology and Architectural Practice in India,” in *Sacred Architecture in the Traditions of India, China, Judaism and Islam*, ed. Emily Lyle (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 9–10.
30. Titus Burckhardt, *Chartres and the Birth of the Cathedral*, trans. William Stoddart (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom Books, 1996), 33.
31. *Ibid.*, 29, with illustrations.
32. *Ibid.*, 33, with illustrations.
33. Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple*, 172.
34. *Ibid.*, 174.
35. Kossak and Singer, *Sacred Visions*, 10, fig. 5, and 63.
36. *Ibid.*, 55.
37. *Ibid.*, 131.
38. Masao Yamaguchi, “Theatrical Space in Japan, A Semiotic Approach,” *Japan and America: A Journal of Cultural Studies* 1/1 (1984): 4; J. Edward Kidder Jr., *Japanese Temples: Sculpture, Paintings, Gardens, and Architecture*, photography by Yasukichi Irie (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 58–59.
39. For illustrations, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 70–71. I return to the topic of the cave later in this essay when I discuss the mysteries.
40. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 46.
41. *Ibid.*, 62 n. 13.

42. See Granoff, "Heaven on Earth," 175–76, 180, 182–85; and Dieter Arnold, "Royal Cult Complexes of the Old and Middle Kingdoms," in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 72–73.
43. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 178.
44. Roger Lipsey, ed., *Coomaraswamy: 1: Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism*, Bollingen Series 89 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 4.
45. John M. Lundquist, "The Legitimizing Role of the Temple in the Origin of the State," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent H. Richards (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 274.
46. C. N. Deedes, "The Labyrinth," in *The Labyrinth: Further Studies in the Relation between Myth and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. Samuel H. Hooke (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1935), 3–42.
47. Alan B. Lloyd, "The Egyptian Labyrinth," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 56 (1970): 81–100.
48. Carl Schuster, *Materials for the Study of Social Symbolism in Ancient and Tribal Art: A Record of Tradition and Continuity. Volume 3, Rebirth, Book 2, The Labyrinth and Other Paths to Other Worlds*, ed. Edmund Carpenter (New York: Rock Foundation, 1988); and, in abbreviated form, Carl Schuster and Edmund Carpenter, *Patterns That Connect: Social Symbolism in Ancient and Tribal Art* (New York: Abrams, 1996), 302–13.
49. Keith Critchlow, Jane Carroll, and Llewelyn V. Lee, "Chartres Maze: A Model of the Universe?" *Architectural Association Quarterly* 5/2 (1973): 12–20.
50. Lima de Freitas, "Labyrinth," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 8:411–19.
51. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 139–45.
52. Rodney Castleden, *The Knossos Labyrinth: A New View of the "Palace of Minos" at Knossos* (London: Routledge, 1990), 7, 107, 182.
53. *Ibid.*, 162, 64; see Marina Panagiotaki, *The Central Palace Sanctuary at Knossos* (London: British School at Athens, 1999), 189, 191, 209, 218, 222, 240–42, 273.
54. Castleden, *Knossos Labyrinth*, 108–10, 123–29.
55. Lloyd, "The Egyptian Labyrinth," 96; and see Arnold, "Royal Cult Complexes," 80–82.
56. Gertrude R. Levy, *The Gate of Horn: A Study of the Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age, and Their Influence upon European Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), 36–53.
57. Granoff, "Heaven on Earth," 186.
58. Bassie-Sweet, *At the Edge of the World*, 70.
59. Lloyd, "The Egyptian Labyrinth," 85.

60. Erich Neumann, "The Psychological Meaning of Ritual," *Quadrant: Journal of the C. G. Jung Foundation* 9/2 (1976): 8, emphasis in original.
61. See Levy, *Gate of Horn*.
62. See Lundquist, "Borobudur," with photographs and plans on 284–85, 287, 292–93, 298–99.
63. Freitas, "Labyrinth," 418.
64. See Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 142.
65. *Ibid.*, 139.
66. For illustrations, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 94–95.
67. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 140–42. For illustrations, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 86–87.
68. Critchlow, Carroll, and Lee, "Chartres Maze," 12; see Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 142.
69. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 270.
70. Critchlow, Carroll, and Lee, "Chartres Maze," 12.
71. *Ibid.*, 18. For an illustration of the Chartres labyrinth, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 86.
72. Levy, *Gate of Horn*, 50.
73. Richard Kohn, "The Ritual Preparation of a Tibetan Sand Mandala," in *Mandala and Landscape*, ed. Alexander W. Macdonald (New Delhi: Printworld, 1997), 389 and n. 60.
74. Miyeko Murase, *Tales of Japan: Scrolls and Prints from the New York Public Library* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 20. See also Alex Wayman, "The *Manḍa* and the *la* of the Term *Manḍala*," in *Tantric Buddhism: Centennial Tribute to Dr. Benoytosh Bhattacharyya*, ed. Narendra N. Bhattacharyya (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 23–30.
75. John M. Lundquist, "C. G. Jung and the Temple: Symbols of Wholeness," in *C. G. Jung and the Humanities: Toward a Hermeneutics of Culture*, ed. Karin Barnaby and Pellegrino D'Acerno (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 113–23.
76. Kossak and Singer, *Sacred Visions*, 52. The cremation grounds can function as the outermost circle, as in Nepali-inspired mandalas, or as described here. See Denise P. Leidy and Robert A. F. Thurman, *Mandala: The Architecture of Enlightenment* (New York: Asia Society Galleries, 1997), 72–73, 76–77, 85–87, 92–95.
77. Giuseppe Tucci, *The Theory and Practice of the Mandala: With Special Reference to the Modern Psychology of the Subconscious*, trans. Alan H. Brodrick (London: Rider, 1969), *passim*.
78. Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, 220.

79. Ibid., 190.

80. See Lundquist, "Borobudur."

81. Wayman, *Buddhist Tantras*, 83.

82. Lundquist, *Temple*, 16–19, with illustrations on 80–81, focusing extensively on the Javanese temple of Borobudur, and on the Tibetan *Kālachakra* ritual, to illustrate the meaning of this concept. And see Macdonald, ed., *Mandala and Landscape*, passim.

83. Burckhardt, *Chartres*, 17.

84. Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 274; Granoff, "Heaven on Earth," 174.

85. Van Dyke, "Grids and Serpents," 183.

86. Detlef I. Lauf, *Tibetan Sacred Art, The Heritage of Tantra*, trans. Ewald Osers (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976), 117–68. For an illustration of Samye Monastery in its cosmic layout, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 37.

87. Van Dyke, "Grids and Serpents," 193; Macdonald, *Mandala and Landscape*, passim.

88. See Lundquist, *Temple*, 14, with an illustration, 56–57; and John M. Lundquist, "What Is Reality?" in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 622–35.

89. Burckhardt, *Chartres*, 27.

90. Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 37.

91. Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 274; Granoff, "Heaven on Earth," 175, 177, 184, 187.

92. Lauf, *Tibetan Sacred Art*, 117–18. See Kelsang G. Gyatso, *Essence of Vajrayana: The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala* (London: Tarpa, 1997), 155–58.

93. Carl Kerényi, "The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi," in *Mysteries*, 44.

94. Castleden, *Knossos Labyrinth*, 72, 161.

95. Quoted in Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, 217.

96. Ibid., 334.

97. Ibid., 343.

98. Ibid., 303.

99. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 40. For an extraordinary description of a contemporary attempt to replicate the effect of a *mantra* within an ancient Indian Buddhist ritual space, see Carmel Berkson, *The Caves at Aurangabad: Early Buddhist Tantric Art in India* (New York: Mapin, 1986), xvi. See also Erik Haarh, "Contributions to the Study of Maṇḍala and Mudrā: Analysis of Two Tibetan Manuscripts in the Royal Library in Copenhagen," *Acta Orientalia* 23/1-2 (1958): 63-64.

100. See Charles Malamoud, *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India*, trans. David White (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 197-201.

101. George Thompson, "On Mantras and Frits Staal," in *India and Beyond*, 590.

102. Van Dyke, "Grids and Serpents," 198; Haarh, "Study of Maṇḍala and Mudrā," 58.

103. See Lundquist, *Temple*, 6-10, with numerous examples, and with illustrations on 60-61, 68-69. See also Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 274, 286-88.

104. Coomaraswamy, 7-8.

105. Lundquist, "Legitimizing Role of the Temple," 286-89, 293-95; A. R. George, "'Bond of the Lands': Babylon, the Cosmic Capital," in *Die Orientalische Stadt: Kontinuität, Wandel, Bruch*, ed. Gernot Wilhelm (Saarbrücken: SDV, 1997), 128-29; D.O. Edzard, "Deep-Rooted Skyscrapers and Bricks: Ancient Mesopotamian Architecture and Its Imagery," in *Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East*, ed. M. Mindlin et al. (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1987), 13-24.

106. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 229, citing Coomaraswamy. For a photograph of a medieval architectural rendering of this concept, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 43.

107. Bassie-Sweet, *At the Edge of the World*, 117.

108. Kramrisch, *Hindu Temple*, 169; for illustrations see Lundquist, *Temple*, 52-53.

109. Kerényi, "The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi," 38. Greek monuments make it clear that the initiate closed the eyes—not the mouth—with a blindfold.

110. *Ibid.*, 39.

111. Schmitt, "The Ancient Mysteries," 94.

112. *Ibid.*, 95.

113. Kevin Clinton, *Myth and Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries, The Martin P. Nilsson Lectures on Greek Religion, delivered 19-21 November 1990 at the Swedish Institute at Athens* (Stockholm: Svenska institutet i Athen, 1992), 86.

114. Kerényi, "The Mysteries of the Kabeiroi," 39.

115. *Ibid.*, 41.

116. Schmitt, "The Ancient Mysteries," 94–95.

117. Ibid., 103.

118. Carl Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1967), 48.

119. Ibid., 46–47.

120. Ibid., 47.

121. Ibid., 52.

122. Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, 216.

123. See Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 40.

124. Lanny Bell, "The New Kingdom 'Divine' Temple: The Example of Luxor," in *Temples of Ancient Egypt*, 176.

125. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 38.

126. Walter F. Otto, "The Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries," in *Mysteries*, 29.

127. See also Clinton, *Myth and Cult*, 94–95.

128. Kerényi, *Eleusis*, 15–16.

129. See Malamoud, *Cooking the World*, 201–4.

130. J. McKim Malville, "Cosmogonic Motifs in Indian Temples," in *Sacred Architecture*, 34, 36; see also Van Dyke, "Grids and Serpents," 210.

131. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 57.

132. Ricca and Lo Bue, *Great Stupa of Gyantse*, 50–51, 306–13.

133. Lundquist, "Borobudur," with photographs and architectural top plans.

134. Lundquist, "What Is Reality?" and John M. Lundquist, "Biblical Temple," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. Eric M. Myers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:324–30.

135. Otto, "Meaning of the Eleusinian Mysteries," 29–31; Kerényi, "Mysteries of the Kabeiroi," 37–42; Schmitt, "The Ancient Mysteries," 94–95, 99, 103.

136. Puay-Peng Ho, "The Symbolism of the Central Pillars in Cave-Temples of Northwest China," in *Sacred Architecture*, 65, quoting Nancy S. Steinhardt, "The Han Ritual Hall," in *Chinese Traditional Architecture*, ed. Nancy S. Steinhardt (New York: China Institute in America, China House Gallery, 1984), 69–77; see also Steinhardt, "Altar to Heaven Complex," in *Chinese Traditional Architecture*, 139–49.

137. Granoff, "Heaven on Earth," 175–76, 180, 182–85.

138. *Ibid.*, 184.

139. Van Dyke, "Grids and Serpents," 196; Lundquist, "What Is Reality?"

140. Bell, "The New Kingdom 'Divine' Temple," 133–34, emphasis in original.

141. See Lundquist, *Temple*, 12–16, with illustrations on 56–57, 72–73, and 76–77.

142. Ragnhild B. Finnestad, *Image of the World and Symbol of the Creator: On the Cosmological and Iconological Values of the Temple of Edfu* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1985), 59. For an illustration of this ritual from the Temple of Edfu, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 56.

143. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 266. For Tibet, see Kohn, "Ritual Preparation," 380–83; and Tucci, *Theory and Practice of the Mandala*, 37–38.

144. Quoted in Carlson, "A Geomantic Model," 143; see also Bassie-Sweet, *At the Edge of the World*, 25; and David Freidel, Linda Schele, and Joy Parker, *Maya Cosmos: Three Thousand Years on the Shaman's Path* (New York: Morrow, 1993), 107–8.

145. Schmitt, "The Ancient Mysteries," 108.

146. Freidel, Schele, and Parker, *Maya Cosmos*, 87.

147. *Ibid.*, 103. For illustrations, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 42–43, 76.

148. Bassie-Sweet, *At the Edge of the World*, 29; see 30, fig. 3 for an illustration.

149. Jeffrey F. Meyer, "Chinese Buddhist Monastic Temples as Cosmograms," in *Sacred Architecture*, 72–73.

150. Jean Richer, *Sacred Geography of the Ancient Greeks: Astrological Symbolism in Art, Architecture, and Landscape*, trans. Christine Rhone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 11.

151. *Ibid.*, 4.

152. *Ibid.*, 1. For illustrations, see Lundquist, *Temple*, 34–35.

153. Burckhardt, *Chartres*, 69, with photographs on 50, 68, 86–87.

154. *Ibid.*, 70; see also Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 159–62. The extensive role of the temple ideology in the building of the great Gothic cathedrals is a subject to which I want to return at a later time. For the present, in addition to other references cited in this paper, I would like to direct the interested reader to Titus Burckhardt, *Sacred Art in East and West: Its Principles and Methods*, trans. Lord Northbourne (London: Perennial, 1967); Henry Corbin, "The *Imago Templi* in Confrontation with Secular Norms," in *Temple and Contemplation*, trans. Philip Sherrard and Liadain Sherrard (London: KPI, 1986), 263–390; Painton Cowen, *Rose Windows* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1979); Paul Frankl, "The Secret of the Mediaeval Masons," *Art Bulletin* 27 (1945): 46–60; John

James, "Medieval Geometry: The Western Rose of Chartres Cathedral," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 5/2 (1973): 4–10; Erwin Panofsky, ed. and trans., *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and Its Art Treasures*, 2nd ed. by Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Lars I. Ringbom, *Graltempel und Paradies: Beziehungen zwischen Iran und Europa im Mittelaltar* (Stockholm: Wahlström and Widstrand, 1951); and Otto G. Von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

155. Guénon, *Fundamental Symbols*, 146, 148.

156. *Ibid.*, 148, 150.

157. Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "New Light on Secret Knowledge in Late Babylonian Culture," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 82 (1992): 98.

158. Clinton, *Myth and Cult*, 90–91.

159. Edward Conze, trans., *Perfect Wisdom, The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts* (Totnes, England: Buddhist Publishing Group, 1993), vi; see also Vidya Dehejia, *Yogin, Cult and Temples: A Tantric Tradition* (New Delhi: National Museum, 1986), xi–xii, and Kossak and Singer, *Sacred Visions*, 8.

160. Wayman, *Buddhist Tantras*, 42.

161. Heinrich R. Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred Images of India*, trans. and ed. Gerald Chapple and James B. Lawson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 144.

162. Saso, *Tantric Art*, xiii–xiv.

163. Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, 200; see 207, 216–17, 220.

164. Kalpakam Sankarnarayan and Yoritomi Motohiro, "Concept of Mudra in Japanese (Shingon) Esoteric Buddhism," in *Tantric Buddhism*, 165.

165. See Irit Averbuch, *The Gods Come Dancing: A Study of the Japanese Ritual Dance of Yamabushi Kagura* (Ithaca: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 1995), 67–72.

166. Haarh, "Study of Maṇḍala and Mudrā," 68.

167. David G. White, "Tantric Sects and Tantric Sex: The Flow of Secret Tantric Gnosis," in *Rending the Veil: Concealment and Secrecy in the History of Religions*, ed. Elliot R. Wolfson (New York: Seven Bridges, 1999), 261.

168. *Ibid.*

169. E. Dale Saunders, "Mudrā," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 10:134–37.

170. Abé, *Weaving of Mantra*, 195.

171. *Ibid.*, 361.

172. Ibid., 361–62.

173. Ibid., 362.

174. Pulver, “Jesus’ Round Dance,” 177; Samten G. Karmay, “The Tibetan Cult of Mountain Deities and Its Political Significance,” in *Reflections of the Mountain: Essays on the History and Social Meaning of the Mountain Cult in Tibet and the Himalaya*, ed. Anne-Marie Blondeau and Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Osterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), 69; see Per Kvaerne, introduction to René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (reprint, Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 177–98; see Kerényi, *Eleusis*, 18.

175. Kerényi, “Mysteries of the Kabeiroi,” 38.

176. Kerényi, *Eleusis*, 47.